



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560 • Olympia, Washington 98504-2560 • (360) 902-1800

December 1, 2005

Dear WSDA Certified Organic Producer:

Welcome to the 2006 production season! **PLEASE READ THIS LETTER:** It contains useful information about your 2006 renewal forms and how to complete them in a manner that is both time sensitive for you and allows us to verify your farm's compliance with National Organic Standards.

PLEASE NOTE: Applications postmarked after February 1 will be charged a late fee of \$75.

As you may have noticed, this year's renewal is much smaller than the packet you received in 2005. For 2006, we have worked hard to make the renewal paperwork requirements as succinct as possible! We appreciate your feedback and have done our best to respond in a manner that continues to ensure that National Organic Program requirements for organic certification are met.

This letter will address several questions we consistently received from certified organic producers during the 2005 production season and questions you may have upon receipt of your 2006 renewal application.

- Why do we ask the questions we ask on the forms that are sent with renewal packets?
- Are these forms available on-line?
- Where is the updated Brand Name Materials List?
- Do I need to notify WSDA if my organic system plan changes during the year?
- Where is the Cost Share Application?
- I am a producer/processor or a producer/handler. Where is my Organic Handling Plan?
- Where is the "extra" information usually included in the renewal application packet?
- Who do I contact at the Organic Food Program with questions specific to my operation?

We hope that this will clarify our expectations for completing your renewal application and help facilitate this year's certification process. Additionally, we have created instructions that provide guidance for completing your 2006 organic renewal application.

WHY DO WE ASK THE QUESTIONS WE ASK ON THE FORMS THAT ARE SENT WITH RENEWAL PACKETS?

A common question that was asked in response to the 2005 renewal applications was why we required the information asked on the renewal forms and how these questions pertained to your organic certification. The questions contained in your renewal application packets are asked for several primary reasons:

- To demonstrate compliance of your farming operation with National Organic Standards;
- To provide information adequate to facilitate an on-site sales/yield audit to be conducted at the time of your annual organic food inspection; and,
- To demonstrate compliance of the WSDA Organic Food Program with the accreditation requirements of the National Organic Program, ISO Guide 65 (International Organization for Accreditation), and IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements).

ARE APPLICATION FORMS AVAILABLE ON-LINE?

Yes. Copies of all application forms can be found at the WSDA Organic Food Program Website: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm#Survey%20Results%202004>. Forms are available in both .PDF and word format. Forms in word format may be saved and filled out electronically. If you complete the forms electronically you will need to print the forms and mail them to the Olympia office. We do not have the capacity to accept electronic applications at this time but we hope to have that capacity in 2007. Please direct any questions you may have pertaining to the WSDA Organic Food Program website to Jennifer Watson at (360) 902-1885 or email: jwatson@agr.wa.gov.

WHERE IS THE UPDATED BRAND NAME MATERIALS LIST?

The current Brand Name Material List is usually included in the renewal application packet. This year, we were not able to print the BNML in time to include it in the renewal packet. However, the list is currently under construction with an expected completion date of January 15, 2006. We expect to be sending your 2006 Brand Name Material List under a separate cover at the end of January. In the meantime, you may use your 2005 BNML, visit our website at www.agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/MaterialsList.htm, or contact Katherine Withey at (360) 902-1882 if you have questions regarding a specific material. Thank you for your patience.

DO I NEED TO NOTIFY WSDA IF MY ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN CHANGES DURING THE YEAR?

The Organic Cropping System Plan should describe your plans for producing organic crops. It is understood that environmental, economic, and other reasons can cause you to modify this plan as the season progresses. The National Organic Program requires that certified operations notify their certifying agent *prior* to making any changes that could affect the integrity of organic products. The question lies, then, in what changes could impact the organic integrity of an operation?

You need to notify the WSDA Organic Program if you plan to do the following:

- Apply a prohibited substance to any field, production unit, livestock, product or site in organic production.
- Add a site to organic production (you must submit a New Site Application Packet);
- Remove a site or a portion of a site from organic production;
- Utilize a new label for your organic products.
- Acquire replacement animals.
- Purchase organic products from other producers.
- Process organic food products or handle organic products produced by other organic producers.
- Change any portion of a certified operation that may affect your compliance with the National Organic Standards.

You can notify WSDA of those changes by letter, email, or fax:

WSDA Organic Food Program
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
Email: organic@agr.wa.gov
FAX (360) 902-2087.

For minor changes to your Organic System Plan, you do not need to notify the WSDA Organic Food Program. Please ensure that you include these changes in your annual Organic System Plan Update. Minor changes to your Organic System Plan may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Exchange of one allowed material for another allowed material;
- Obtaining organic seed from a new seed supplier
- Changing your crop rotation or planting a new cover crop.
- Implementing new preventative pest control practices.
- Selling or distributing to new markets or handlers.

WHERE IS THE COST SHARE APPLICATION?

The National Organic Certification Cost Share Program offsets 75% of the organic certification fees up to a maximum of \$500 per year to organic producers, processors and handlers. WSDA has been providing this cost share program to Washington farms and businesses since 2003. Since 2003 we have provided over \$500,000 to certified organic operations to offset the cost of certification.

The funding for the program is running out. USDA has stated that additional funding for the program is not available. Additional funding for the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program has not been appropriated in the 2006 Federal Agricultural budget. We estimate that there will be \$70,000 in available funds in 2006 for the cost share program. WSDA is developing an equitable method for distributing the remaining organic certification cost share money. Application forms for the 2006 Organic Certification Cost Share Program will be sent in January 2006.

I AM A PRODUCER/PROCESSOR OR A PRODUCER/HANDLER. WHERE IS MY ORGANIC HANDLING PLAN?

If you process on your farm and/or handle other certified organic producers' products, your business will require Organic Processor or Organic Handler certification, in addition to your producer certification. Renewal Processor/Handler applications will be mailed to applicants in early January. Renewal Processor/Handler applications are due March 1. If you have further questions pertaining to either obtaining or maintaining Organic Processor or Organic Handler certification, please contact Brenda Book at (360) 902-2090 or email: bbook@agr.wa.gov

WHERE IS THE "EXTRA" INFORMATION USUALLY INCLUDED IN THE RENEWAL PACKETS?

Last year, we at the Organic Food Program worked hard to condense all of the pertinent information concerning your organic certification into the "Organic Certification Guide." Please continue to use this guide as a resource when questions arise. Additionally, the Quarterly Report is a means through which the Organic Food Program will articulate any information that might impact your farming operation throughout the year. Program information and links to important information are available on-line at agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic.htm. Finally, we are always available in the office to answer phone calls and emails as questions arise.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT RENEW MY CERTIFICATION?

Your organic certification continues to be effective until you withdraw from the organic certification program or WSDA suspends or revokes your organic certification. If you do not intend to renew your organic certification please contact WSDA by phone, email, letter or fax and state that you would like to withdraw from the program.

In early March 2006, WSDA will identify the certified organic operations that have not renewed or withdrawn from certification. Notices of Noncompliance will be issued to all operations that have not renewed or withdrawn. If we do not receive a response to the Notice of Noncompliance a Notice of Proposed Suspension will be issued. If there is no response to the Notice of Proposed Suspension the operation will be suspended from the National Organic Certification Program.

WHO DO I CONTACT AT THE ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM WITH QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO MY OPERATION?

The WSDA Organic Food Program staff bring unique backgrounds and areas of special interest that, together, form a well-rounded staff that is able to answer most questions you might have about your organic certification. The following is a list of Organic Food Program office staff, their contact information, and descriptions of their areas of specialty. Please use this list to determine who will be best able to answer any questions that may arise during the next production season:

Miles McEvoy: Organic Program Manager, Olympia, (360) 902-1924, mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov. Contact Miles with questions pertaining to program development, feedback on customer service, the Organic Advisory Board, the National Organic Standards Board, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and to report complaints concerning violations of organic standards.

Les Eklund: Organic Field Supervisor, Olympia, (360) 902-1981, leklund@agr.wa.gov. Contact Les with questions pertaining to when to expect your organic food inspection or with feedback on your annual organic food inspections.

Katherine Withey: Livestock Certification Specialist/Materials Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1882, kwithey@agr.wa.gov. Contact Katherine with questions pertaining to livestock certification and material registration.

Rachael Jamison: Producer Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1951, rjamison@agr.wa.gov. Contact Rachael with questions pertaining to producer certification in Central and Eastern Washington, producer EOVP certification, and issues related to the Quarterly Report.

Richard Carr: Organic Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 725-5492, rcarr@agr.wa.gov. Contact Richard with questions pertaining to producer certification in Western Washington and bakery/coffee roaster certification.

Brenda Book: Handler/Processor Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-2090, bbook@agr.wa.gov. Contact Brenda with questions pertaining to handler/processor certification, handler/processor EOVP certification, and export documentation needs.

Jennifer Watson: Organic Fee Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1885, jwatson@agr.wa.gov. Contact Jennifer with questions about your organic certification fees, the Organic Cost Share Program, refunds, and setting up payment plans.

Christa Bemis: Customer Service Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1805, cbemis@agr.wa.gov. Contact Christa with requests for copies of application or recordkeeping forms as well as copies of forms that you submitted.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to create an organic certification program that meets both your needs and the requirements of the National Organic Program. We'll see you during the upcoming 2006 production season!

Sincerely,
The WSDA Organic Food Program Staff

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Olympia, WA

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